



Professional Time Scheduling For Unclassified Staff

Background

Cooperative Extension unclassified staff (those in faculty and academic staff positions) have varying work demands beyond normal working hours. Professional time scheduling is an essential tool for achieving a life-work balance for those positions that regularly require professional contributions beyond normal working hours.

Cooperative Extension colleagues in unclassified staff positions are professional salaried employees. As such, they are employed to develop and implement plans of work and accomplish agreed-upon work responsibilities. They must have the flexibility to schedule professional time to meet clientele needs and position responsibilities while not unfairly infringing upon their right to personal time away from job responsibilities.

In addition, county-based unclassified staff are expected to provide for the delivery of program services to the public and, to fulfill that expectation, should maintain a schedule that allows appropriate public availability which is clearly communicated to clients, colleagues and support staff.

Definition of Professional Time Scheduling

Effective professional time scheduling makes it possible for Cooperative Extension colleagues to balance achievement and enjoyment of: work, family, friends and self. It is the responsibility of individuals in salaried professional positions to work toward such a balance since doing so contributes to productivity and greater personal job satisfaction.

Professional time scheduling reflects a fundamental characteristic of salaried positions, namely a commitment to put in the hours needed to accomplish agreed-upon work responsibilities, even if doing so means working hours outside of a standard 8:00-5:00 weekday schedule. While working a more flexible schedule may be common for those in salaried positions, it is important to note that professional time scheduling is not the same as compensatory (comp) time. Compensatory time is primarily a benefit of hourly positions. What this means is that while professional time scheduling makes it possible for colleagues in unclassified staff positions to take off other hours in exchange for those hours worked in excess of one's percent of appointment in any given week, these hours are not to be taken off on an "hour for hour" basis.

Establishment of Office Operational Guidelines

Cooperative Extension offices at the local and unit levels are encouraged to establish operational guidelines regarding the use of professional time scheduling for its full- and part-time staff in professional salaried positions. While these guidelines may vary somewhat from office to office given the differences in office operations and types of positions, all professional time scheduling guidelines should provide the necessary flexibility to meet clientele, employee and office needs in a balanced way.

It is expected that office operational guidelines will:

1. Support a balance of professional time and personal time that is positive for the individual and the organization.
2. Emphasize personal responsibility for accountability regarding the use and reporting of paid leave consistent with [UW System policy](#). For example, UW System policy requires unclassified staff to declare an “official” work week, i.e., no less than 40 hours per week for full-time staff. Personal responsibility and accountability extends to clearly communicating with staff and colleagues about one’s weekly work schedule and work locations if out of the office. Such communication is more than just a professional gesture. When a constituent calls or visits the office, it is important for office staff to be able to estimate one’s availability. In addition, if an accident should occur, it is important to be able to document whether an employee was on work or personal time.
3. Ensure reasonable access to Extension expertise during regular office hours, including during late afternoons, Fridays, and times that are close to official holidays. For example, professional time scheduling is not intended to be used to routinely augment holiday, vacation or sick leave; or to be used in a repetitive pattern, i.e., to take every Friday off.
4. Be consistent with [Cooperative Extension’s policy on paid holidays when the local office schedules differ from state policy](#).

Foundational Assumptions for Office Operational Guidelines

1. The primary purpose of establishing professional time scheduling guidelines is to ensure all offices, and the colleagues that work within them, have the necessary work environment and ongoing capacity to achieve Cooperative Extension’s mission in a productive and professional fashion. Trust levels in office work environments break down when colleagues don’t communicate with one another regarding schedules and schedule changes.
2. It is possible to achieve life-work balance even when working in positions that are expected to engage in work duties beyond standard office hours (e.g., beyond 8:00-5:00, Monday through Friday).
3. The use of professional time scheduling to accomplish greater life-work balance is the exception rather than the norm. If an employee is finding it difficult to regularly achieve life-work balance, it is his or her personal responsibility to seek counsel, support and additional resources in order to better manage the work load. This may include finding ways to prioritize new requests even when clientele expectations or programming needs are increasing, or limiting work at night or on weekends.
4. It is possible to find ways to organize life and work in order to effectively manage one’s energy levels so activities that are energy depleting can regularly be balanced by activities that restore energy. Resources are available at www.worklifebalance.com